



NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Joyce Sayler
Community Partnership Coordinator
Division of Cancer Prevention and Control
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2333 or 800.280.5512
E-mail: jsayler@nd.gov

March Is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Bismarck, N.D. – March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, and the North Dakota Department of Health is encouraging all North Dakotans 50 and older to be screened for colorectal cancer.

“Colon cancer is preventable and curable. Reduce your preventable risk factors and get screened,” states Dr. John Leitch, Medical Oncologist at Sanford Health in Fargo and Chair of the North Dakota Cancer Coalition. “Screening tests can often find growths called polyps that can be removed before they turn into cancer. Talk to your doctor about which tests might be right for you. Many insurance plans now cover the cost for colorectal cancer screening. Screening saves lives, but only if people get tested,” Dr. Leitch added.

Colorectal cancer is the third-most diagnosed cancer for men and women in North Dakota, and is the third leading cause of cancer deaths. Each year approximately 380 North Dakotan men and women will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer and 140 North Dakotans will die from the disease. “These statistics could look much better if more people were screened for colorectal cancer,” states Joyce Sayler, Community Partnership Coordinator, Division of Cancer Prevention and Control at the North Dakota Department of Health. Currently, 40 percent of age-eligible North Dakotans have never been screened for colorectal cancer or are past due for screening.

In addition to having regular cancer screenings, North Dakotans can reduce their risk of getting colorectal cancer by following these guidelines:

Don’t use, or stop using tobacco

- Tobacco use is shown to cause colorectal and other cancers, including lung, mouth, larynx (voice box), throat, esophagus, kidney, bladder, pancreas, stomach and cervical cancer
- Don’t smoke – if you do, stop. No single method of quitting works for everyone. Find the way that works best for you by going to the NDQUITS website at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/ndquits>

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Eat a balanced diet that includes a variety of healthy foods

- Eat fruits and vegetable (five to nine servings daily)
- Eat foods that are high in fiber (25 grams of fiber daily)
- Eat fat-free or low-fat dairy products (3 servings daily)
- Eat legumes, beans, nuts, fish, poultry and lean meats
- Limit intake of red and processed meat

Maintain a healthy weight

- Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight is important for overall health
- If you are overweight or obese, you are at higher risk of developing serious health problems, including heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers, including colorectal cancer

Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all

- Limit alcohol intake to one drink or less per day for women
- Limit alcohol intake to two drinks or less per day for men
- Colorectal cancer risk increases substantially with more than two drinks a day

For more information about colorectal cancer and colorectal cancer awareness month, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/> or contact Joyce Sayler at 701.328.2306.

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